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Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders

Note by the Secretariat*

Summary

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the high-level political forum, "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the website of the forum, at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf.

* The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the thematic papers submitted to the high-level political forum by the major groups and other stakeholders and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

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I. Women

1. More than ever, women and girls are most greatly affected by inequality, yet they are also key actors of sustainable development and are knowledgeable in providing solutions to challenges. With just 13 years to implement the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, issues such as climate change and ecological damage magnify the urgency of action needed to reach every woman and every girl of every age, place, ability and status.

2. "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", where just eight men hold the same wealth as the poorest half of the world, requires tackling the systemic barriers and structural inequalities, including neoliberalist capitalism, fundamentalisms, racism and patriarchy, that cause and exacerbate inequalities; it also requires addressing the issues of militarism, corporate influence, consumption and production and civil society space that is shrinking.

3. Gender inequality (Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals) is one of the most pervasive inequalities, evidenced by the numbers of women living in poverty (Goal 1); discriminatory laws/policies targeting women, including unequal inheritance or criminalization of abortion (Goals 2 and 3); predominant unsustainable industrial agriculture/fisheries models that are pushing out small farmers and people engaged in artisanal fishing, the majority of whom are women (Goals 2 and 14); and the reduction/elimination of essential services and infrastructure women and girls rely on, such as education and health services and social protection (Goals 3 and 9).

4. Solutions by, with and for women as actors in sustainable development must be elevated to guide coherence in addressing multiple Sustainable Development Goals, alongside systemic barriers. For example, women's groups support organic agriculture and solar energy cooperatives to produce healthy food, generate decent income and mitigate climate change (Goals 1, 2, 5, 8, 9 and 13).

5. The Women's Major Group highlights the following five essential areas for action:

(a) Women's human rights: take a democratization and human rights-based approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end:

(i) Recognize human rights and the rights and free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples, local communities and women in all their diversity;

(ii) Ensure the safety of environmental and women human rights defenders;

(iii) Safeguard bodily autonomy, end violence against women and enhance respect for girls and women of all ages, including by respecting, protecting and upholding sexual and reproductive rights;

(iv) Mainstream gender equality;

(v) Ensure women's participation in peace negotiations and decision-making processes in humanitarian contexts.

(b) Meaningful participation: tokenistic representation will not be a solution. In that regard:

(i) Institutionalize participation mechanisms for rights holders in an inclusive and equitable manner;

(ii) At the high-level political forum, create significant participatory spaces for major groups and other stakeholders;

(iii) At the regional sessions, ensure that civil society can express diverse voices rather than one consolidated voice;

(iv) Openly promote the participation of women's civil society in preparing voluntary national reports;

(v) Provide sufficient time for the major groups and other stakeholders to engage in a dialogue with the reporting countries.

(c) Civil society space: Member States and civil society must work together closely to maintain and enhance the space, building strength from diversity;

(d) Finance: directly resource women's rights groups;

(e) Accountability: all actors have responsibility under Agenda 2030. In that regard:

(i) Corporations must assess and address their impact through a binding framework;

(ii) Governments must localize the Goals, build baselines and creatively collect and analyse disaggregated data;

(iii) Governments must develop mechanisms to ensure the engagement of women-led organizations in the localization and monitoring of the Goals;

(iv) Develop new measures to ensure an understanding of the sustainability of the use and management of natural resources, the sustainability of consumption and production and the level of the gender equality index.

6. To implement the Sustainable Development Goals and a transformative 2030 Agenda, Member States and all actors must address the gender and human rights dimensions of each goal and the linkages between goals, taking into account women and girls of all ages and diversities.

II. Children and youth

7. The 2030 Agenda is intended to be universal and transformative, and change the current trajectory towards sustainability. The ambition and the timeline demand the need for drastic changes in the development paradigms.

8. The key to tackling multidimensional poverty and achieving Goal 1 lies in the shift from the neoliberal economic paradigm that pursues profit and growth over people and the planet. Multidimensional poverty, understood as a scourge on the planet, requires an end to crippling austerity policies globally, the active implementation of a universal basic income and caps on maximum income.

9. Goal 2 must be understood in the context of food sovereignty, to liberate marginalized communities from their state of external dependence for their own sustenance. Moreover, the aggressive corporatization of genetic resources and biodiversity must be reversed, in line with an understanding of Goal 2 that has sovereignty as its focus.

10. The changing context of the national and global health landscape needs to be well incorporated into policies focused on Goal 3, in order to adequately address such emerging issues as antimicrobial resistance, infectious pandemics and the shifting burden to non-communicable diseases that threaten progress on health gains. In addition, the trend of the increasing influence of industry and harsher structural barriers through a more stringent intellectual properties rights regime needs to be reversed.

11. Certain countries still do not recognize women as equal to men under their constitutions. The empowerment of girls and women and the achievement of Goal 5 require holistic legislative and societal changes, catalysed by the targeted efforts of States and the inclusion of men and boys in the effort. These include overcoming social, economic, cultural and political barriers that seek to control the bodily autonomy of women, their economic mobility and social participation, while imposing a binary view of gender on society.

12. Infrastructure development should take a regional approach and take into account the needs of different types of territories (urban and non-urban), through community-driven assessments of the social, economic and ecological impacts of such development.

13. To adequately address the complex sustainability challenges of oceans (a planetary boundary), there is need for an ethic of evidence-based stewardship and work towards a global treaty on oceans and plastics, while addressing the issues of extraterritorial overfishing that threatens biodiversity and the sustenance of populations dependent on oceans.

14. The success of the 2030 Agenda requires greater integration and coherence of the various universally adopted sustainable development frameworks. Some of these include the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the New Urban Agenda, the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns and the Paris Agreement. These must be understood as part of a larger international effort towards sustainability policies that are universally applicable.

15. National and international policies should seek to align macroeconomic frameworks with the three dimensions of sustainable development. Concrete initiatives such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Ecological Risk Integration into Sovereign Credit methodology and ecological tax reform should be expanded and applied universally, in addition to addressing stranded assets and the transition from fractional to full reserve banking, as a step towards operationalizing a framework that views the economy as a subset of the environment and society.

16. We must apply a science policy interface that seeks the appropriate use of sensible data, while applying context specific technology and purpose-driven innovation in synchrony with indigenous knowledge.

17. Member States should convene a process to classify ecocide as a crime against humanity.

18. In order to achieve rights-based modalities for participation that ensure protected spaces for critical segments of society, the major groups and other stakeholders should be formally engaged in all stages and levels of sustainable development policy.

III. Indigenous peoples

19. The approximately 370 million indigenous peoples worldwide account for about 5 per cent of the world's population but 15 per cent of the extreme poor.[1]

20. Poverty is also a factor in the food insecurity of indigenous peoples. This alarming condition is the consequence of historical colonization, subjugation and assimilation, and the prevailing discriminatory structures and systematic violation

[1] www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples/overview.

of the rights of indigenous peoples. The widespread loss of lands, territories and resources has weakened their customary systems, which are the bases of their distinct identities, dignity and well-being. The status of ownership, control and security of indigenous peoples to manage their lands and resources defines their state of impoverishment.

21. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a holistic and human rights based-approach to ensure that indigenous peoples' overall well-being, dignity, and cultural integrity are not undermined, and that they are not "left behind".

22. Furthermore, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals must overcome the failures and gaps in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, such as lack of data disaggregation based on ethnicity, the absence of effective participation, and inappropriate programmes for poverty reduction, education and health, among others.

23. In particular, gender equality and the empowerment of women (Goal 5), needs to address the multidimensional discrimination and exclusion that indigenous women face owing to their gender, ethnicity and economic situation. Furthermore, the critical role and contributions of women in community development must be recognized and enhanced.

24. Goal 9 on sustainable infrastructure and industrialization poses some threats to indigenous peoples if the "business-as-usual" approach persists. The expropriation of indigenous lands and resources for infrastructure and industrial development has undermined their well-being and resulted in impoverishment and the loss of livelihoods and cultural heritage. The legacy of States and the private sector of sacrificing indigenous peoples' rights in the name of development needs to be rectified through the implementation of policies and measures that ensure free prior and informed consent, along with the respect and protection of indigenous peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources and to self-determination.

25. Millions of indigenous peoples are dependent on oceans, not only for their livelihoods but for their culture, way of life and identity. However, the worsening impacts of climate change, as well as severe pollution of oceans and extensive commercial fishing are now threatening the very survival of indigenous peoples dependent on oceans.

26. The means of implementation have to encompass adequate finance and resources to support targeted plans and programmes to address poverty, health, quality education and the self-determination of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, indigenous peoples must be recognized as key actors and rights holders in the context of sustainable development, given their traditional knowledge and sustainable resource management practices, among others. Indigenous peoples have taken initiatives to establish partnerships, including the Global Call to Action on Indigenous and Community Land Rights and the Indigenous Navigator, a framework to generate data and monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

27. The following are the key recommendations of the Major Group:

(a) With their effective participation, recognize indigenous peoples as distinct groups with specific rights and conditions when designing strategies and programmes on poverty reduction and food security;

(b) Ensure data disaggregation on the basis of indigenous identity;

(c) Institutionalize mechanisms for the effective participation and representation of indigenous peoples in processes relating to the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Legally recognize the customary collective land rights of indigenous peoples and adopt indicators to monitor progress in that regard;

(e) Ensure that the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples is required for development projects that affect them, establish effective grievance mechanisms and ensure equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms;

(f) Ensure adequate financing and resources for targeted plans and programmes that address poverty, food security, health and the self-determined development of indigenous peoples.

IV. Non-governmental organizations

28. The high-level political forum in 2017 addresses the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", an imperative that is also a prerequisite for sustainable peace. Achieving these aims will not be possible unless the structural and systemic barriers to achievement — and root causes of the exploitation and degradation of the environment — are addressed.

29. Current neoliberal macroeconomic policy is a major driver of the unequal distribution of wealth and power and the destruction of natural resources, and must be reconsidered and replaced. Notions of development based entirely on economic growth present a myopic view of progress and must be discarded, and corporations must be held to account for their social and environmental records. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Major Group calls for a new development paradigm that furthers the well-being of humans, nature and animals, and that sees as its ultimate aim the achievement of equity and justice, to "leave no one behind".

30. The practical contributions of civil society are a distinct and important element of this process. The NGO Major Group therefore calls upon the United Nations and the Member States to increase the engagement of civil society, by soliciting more extensive inputs from major groups and other stakeholders, and providing the translation of those inputs into the six official languages of the United Nations. Allowing ample time for meaningful engagement of civil society in the implementation and review processes of the Sustainable Development Goals is essential at the global, regional and national levels.

31. Each country is responsible for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in consultation with its people, to address collective challenges from a place of shared endeavour. From individuals to local authorities to national ministries to United Nations system agencies, each must take ownership of the Goals in their particular contexts — acknowledging that all Goals are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

32. The NGO Major Group recommends the following regarding the Sustainable Development Goals under review in 2017:

(a) **Goal 1**. Addressing the causes and manifestations of structural poverty requires holistic, context-specific solutions interlinked with all other Goals. Governments should report on their efforts to increase opportunities, well-being, and resilience among all sectors of society;

(b) **Goal 2**. To end hunger and all forms of malnutrition, agricultural production must be changed from high-input, industrial exploitation towards

systems that support smallholders' livelihoods and preserve cultures and biodiversity;

(c) **Goal 3**. Efforts to achieve health-related targets should prioritize the full spectrum of services, from promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation. Governments, through a multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach, must endeavour to remove social, cultural, and economic barriers to ensure full access to affordable and quality physical and mental health services for all;

(d) **Goal 5**. Obstacles to the actualization of gender equality and the fundamental rights of women and girls should be overcome through implementing laws and policies that prohibit discrimination, redistribute unpaid care work, promote equality in access to resources, education and decision-making, in alignment with internationally agreed conventions and standards;

(e) **Goal 9**. All governments, including regional and local authorities, should promote inclusive, ecologically sound industrialization and the provision of basic infrastructure that incorporates the protection of nature and participatory decision-making;

(f) **Goal 14**. Goal 14 must be a keystone in protecting the oceans as a substantial part of the biosphere, a unique ecosystem, an integral part of human civilization and major food provider, and a common good with equal and fair access rights.

33. In keeping with the commitment to "leave no one behind," the full position paper of the NGO Major Group details the ways in which the Sustainable Development Goals are interconnected, locally applicable yet requiring universal commitment, and essential for the eradication of poverty and promotion of prosperity for all.

V. Local authorities

34. All of the Sustainable Development Goals have targets that are directly or indirectly related to the daily work of local and regional governments, which should not be seen as mere implementers of the agenda. Local and regional governments are policymakers, catalysts of change and the level of government best placed to link the global goals with local communities and territorial realities.

35. Local and regional governments are committed to playing their part in the achievement of global goals through the process of localization.

36. The Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments brings together the major international networks of local and regional governments to coordinate their contributions to global policy development and reporting processes.

Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals in support of the achievement of the 2030 Agenda

37. Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals relates to: (a) how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through bottom-up action; and (b) how the Goals can provide a framework for local development policy. Providing local and regional governments with an enabling environment and resources to participate in the "localization" of the Goals is a strategic priority to ensure the success of the national efforts and the whole global agenda.

38. As a contribution to this process, the members of the Global Task Force are:

(a) Developing tools and indicators to support follow-up at the national level and encourage localization and peer review and exchange. In that regard, we request stronger involvement of local and regional governments in the process of defining indicators. Hence, we call upon national Governments and United Nations system agencies to involve subnational governments in the discussion around monitoring and reporting on Goal 11;

(b) Developing a global reporting mechanism that builds specifically upon the experience of local and regional governments with regard to implementation and localization, which could provide input into the high-level political forum.

39. An effective follow-up and review framework should promote the seamless integration of local and regional governments in the monitoring process at all levels. While the international community has initiated a monitoring and reporting mechanism referring directly to national Governments, local and regional governments should take part in this global conversation, bringing the local and subnational perspectives.

40. Networks of local and regional governments are currently being mobilized to become involved in the voluntary national review processes. Surveys are being developed to assess methodologies and levels of involvement. Furthermore, United Cities and Local Governments and the Global Task Force networks are developing a global reporting mechanism that will allow implementation to be monitored from a local and regional government perspective, in line with the evaluation cycles defined by the high-level political forum.

41. We call upon national Governments to make efforts to mobilize stakeholders towards a consensus on the definition of national priorities, strategies and the institutional framework for the 2030 Agenda.

Mobilizing financial resources

42. The Financing for Development Forum should promote the exchange of practices on the best modalities to strengthen the mobilization of domestic resources (including local taxes) and a better allocation of resources between national, subnational and local governments, to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

43. In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (in particular para. 34), local authorities should be recognized as a specific partner — at the same level as civil society organizations and the private sector — and should be associated with the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development.

Conclusion

44. Local and regional governments are committed to contributing to a new global partnership with international institutions, national Governments, civil society and the private sector. They will continue to use global platforms to speak out for the potential of local action to drive development and to call for appropriate legal and financial frameworks to support all local and regional governments in playing their part in the achievement of this ambitious, integrated and universal agenda.

VI. Workers and trade unions

Decent work for all to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity

45. The Decent Work Agenda, in its four dimensions, is a comprehensive and unparalleled framework for "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a

changing world", and interconnects all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through job creation, strong social protections systems and quality public services, better working conditions and access to democratic decision-making, people, communities and countries can lift themselves out of poverty, improve livelihoods, engage in local development and live together in peace. This happens only when work is decent, environmentally sound and productive, provides living wages and is underpinned by labour rights, and accessible to all men and women workers alike, regardless of their migration status.

46. As trade unions, we believe that ending poverty (Goal 1) requires that people have access to decent livelihoods that are fairly compensated, and that social protection systems are comprehensive and support inclusion through adequate income support and quality public services. Guaranteeing living wages in all forms of employment can help tackle in-work poverty, which remains persistent throughout the world, while establishing social protection floors can ensure that no one is left behind.

47. We also believe that achieving gender equality (Goal 5) will not be possible without concerted action to transform labour markets for women's paid and unpaid work. Closing the gender pay gap requires a policy of "equal pay for work of equal value". Minimum living wages and measures to promote women's equal access to social protection can also help to address gender disparities in income and reduce poverty. The pursuit of gender equality requires measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life, particularly through investment in care services.

48. To do so, Governments should:

(a) Implement national minimum living wages with the full involvement of social partners. Minimum wages should take into account the cost of living, should be evidence-based and regularly reviewed and adjusted (e.g., to take into account inflation). Ensure collective bargaining rights in order to achieve fair wages above the minimum wage level;

(b) Ensure adequate, universally accessible social protection in line with the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), taking measures to create fiscal space for social services, where needed;

(c) Bring national laws and enforcement practices on freedom of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, and non-discrimination into compliance with ILO core labour standards and promote social dialogue (between employers and workers);

(d) Support the transition from the informal to the formal economy to increase workers' job and income security and generate fiscal resources to ensure social protection systems and quality public services;

(e) Reduce disparities between women and men's access to social protection through adequately crediting periods of care for contributory benefits, providing survivors' benefits and ensuring universal access to income support;

(f) Ensure access to affordable, quality care services to support women's economic empowerment and promote the well-being of children and others who need care, such as the sick and elderly;

(g) Enhance the quality of jobs in the formal care sector, in order to improve the attractiveness of care jobs as well as ensure high-quality provision of services;

(h) Significantly increase investment in quality public services to ensure universal access to health care and free primary and secondary education;

(i) Ratify the Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers, 2011 (ILO Convention No. 189) and integrate it into national legislation;

(j) Follow up on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment[2] to recognize, redistribute and reduce care work and ensure decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers.

VII. Business and industry

49. The Business and Industry Major Group is fully committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and acknowledges the critical role it must play in accelerating progress towards sustainable development as an engine of growth and employment, as a key contributor to government revenues and as a driver of innovation, capacity-building and technological development.

50. Addressing the challenges in eradicating poverty and creating decent and productive work for those at risk of being left behind will require the private sector to be meaningfully engaged at all levels of the implementation of, follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda.

51. The frontline involvement already by so many companies and business associations in the shaping of the 2030 Agenda shows that the private sector is stepping up to participate in the transformations that are required for these challenges to be tackled: to eradicate poverty, to advance sustainability and for prosperity to thrive and be widely shared.

52. The private sector in all its forms — farms, small and medium enterprises, family owned companies, national firms, and multinationals — is making a major contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The business sector looks forward to engaging in the high-level political forum in 2017 as an actively engaged partner in sustainability through knowledge-sharing, providing expertise in policy formation and implementation, and in partnerships.

VIII. Scientific and Technological Community

53. The Scientific and Technological Community — co-organized by the International Council for Science, the International Social Science Council and the World Federation of Engineering Organizations — greatly welcomes the theme for the high-level political forum in 2017 on "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" and underlines the important role of sciences — natural, social, health and engineering sciences — in poverty eradication and in fostering prosperity.

54. As highlighted by the high-level political forum in 2016 and through the prototype editions of the *Global Sustainable Development Report*, scientific knowledge provides the basis for evidence-based decision-making on sustainable development at all levels. Agenda 2030 needs science, technology and innovation at every step.

[2] Available from www.womenseconomicempowerment.org/assets/reports/UNWomen17-010313h.pdf.

55. The Scientific and Technological Community welcomes the set of Goals to be reviewed in this session, and would like to recall some of its activities that support their implementation. The publication of the International Social Science Council, *World Social Science Report 2016, Challenging Inequalities: Pathways to a Just World*,[3] discusses approaches to achieve Goals 1 and 11, while its Comparative Research Programme on Poverty publishes cutting-edge research on Agenda 2030.[4] There are activities related to Goal 3 such as the Programme on Health and Well-being in the Changing Urban Environment[5] — co-sponsored by the International Council for Science, the United Nations University and the InterAcademy Medical Panel — and initiatives contributing to Goal 14 such as the Global Ocean Observing System[6] — co-sponsored by the International Council for Science, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Meteorological Organization and UNEP. Regarding Goal 9, the World Federation of Engineering Organizations has launched initiatives to support engineering development in Africa, such as the Africa Catalyst initiative and the Africa Engineering Week, organized with UNESCO and held in 2015 and 2016. In addition, the Scientific and Technological Community would like to highlight its activities related to Goal 5 with a focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the sciences. Among other things, it is important to recall the activities and tools by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations Committee on Women in Engineering,[7] the recent report of the InterAcademy Partnership, *Women for Science: Inclusion and Participation in Academies of Science*,[8] and the partnership between the International Council for Science, the International Social Science Council and GenderInSITE[9] towards furthering a gender lens in international science production and coordination.

56. While it is important to address each Goal's specificity, the Scientific and Technological Community has been outspoken in referring to the 2030 Agenda as an "integrated agenda", and has been furthering a better understanding of possible trade-offs as well as synergistic relations between different Goals. In this context, the International Council for Science, in collaboration with a number of other international and national scientific organizations, has completed a report that tests ways of systematically identifying and scoring interactions across the 17 Goals and their targets using a common methodology. Using a seven-point scale, this methodology takes the analysis of interactions beyond the simple categories of "synergies" and "trade-offs". The report entitled "A guide to SDG interactions: from science to implementation" presents a pilot application of the methodology by analysing four Goals in detail (Goals 2, 3, 7 and 14). This is an important tool (to be available soon from www.icsu.org) for ensuring long-lasting sustainable development outcomes.

57. The Scientific and Technological Community — through these and other initiatives such as Future Earth and the joint activities of the International Council for Science and the World Federation of Engineering Organizations — stands ready to work in partnership with policymakers, practitioners, and civil society to jointly identify critical questions that need to be addressed; co-produce knowledge that

[3] Available from http://en.unesco.org/wssr2016.
[4] See www.crop.org.
[5] See www.urbanhealth.cn/.
[6] See www.goosocean.org/.
[7] See www.wfeo.org/stc_women_in_engineering/.
[8] Available from www.interacademies.net/Publications/29832.aspx.
[9] See https://genderinsite.net/.

effectively supports decision-making at different scales; and co-deliver solutions supported by scientific evidence.

58. Recalling the appeal for peace from the United Nations Secretary-General,[10] the Scientific and Technological Community would like to underline the key role that science, technology and innovation can play in furthering peace and international dialogue, as underlined by the theme "Science for peace" of the upcoming World Science Forum,[11] to be held in Jordan from 7 to 11 November 2017.

IX. Education and academia stakeholder group

59. Education is the most sustainable, long-term driver to increase prosperity, and to end poverty for good. Most of the Sustainable Development Goals reviewed by the high-level political forum in 2017 rely on education for their realization; similarly, poverty, hunger, poor health, gender discrimination and climate-related disasters are detrimental to the realization of Goal 4.

60. Free, quality education breaks cycles of poverty and exclusion, making commitment of Goal 4 to universal, free, primary and secondary education vital. A 12 per cent reduction in global poverty could be achieved if all students in low-income countries had basic reading skills. Education addresses discrimination against women and girls, and when women are educated, nutrition, food security, child health and mortality are improved. If all women completed primary school, maternal deaths would decrease by two thirds.

61. To implement the agenda, cross-sectoral relationships and interrelated policymaking are necessary — in line with Goal 17. Education civil society has recognized this; networks have broadened and cross-sectoral dialogues are achieving positive change.

62. Progress has been witnessed on the establishment of focal points for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in some countries, along with efforts to align the targets of the Goals with national policies. It is clear that the global infrastructure developed to support the goals of Education For All 2000-2015 and the subsequent Framework for Action Education 2030 have facilitated the ongoing monitoring of Goal 4 through the *Global Education Monitoring Report* and the swift establishment of accountability mechanisms, including the Sustainable Development Goal 4-Education 2030 Steering Committee.

63. Yet obstacles exist, particularly in a context of protracted and deepening crises and increasingly insular government policy. The financing of the Sustainable Development Goals has proved challenging. To deliver Goal 4, domestic budgets remain insufficient and reductions in official development assistance have not helped. The mobilization of domestic resources should be a priority, yet there is reluctance from the international community to create mechanisms to support increases to domestic resource bases — for example, by establishing a global tax platform. A combination of increased domestic resources, tax justice at the national and international levels and increased international cooperation are necessary to make the implementation of the agenda viable.

64. Despite the participatory climate in which the Sustainable Development Goals were developed, doors have since closed to civil society; activists report aggressive

[10] See www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-01-02/appeal-peace-un-secretary-general-antonio-guterres.

[11] See http://worldscienceforum.org/.

action to limit civil society activity, including restrictions on funding and protest, even direct criminalization. Citizens must have a voice in the decision-making process — as embedded in the Goals themselves.

65. A further challenge lies in the measurement and accountability processes. The global indicators framework is not yet finalized, delaying the collection of stronger, disaggregated data that are critical to ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals deliver for the most marginalized. Civil society can contribute here, with data collected by citizens. However, several proposed education indicators are reducing the agenda to measures of testing, which fails the ambition of Goal 4 to deliver quality education and of all the Goals to ensure that everyone enjoys a fulfilling life.

66. These obstacles impede the delivery of the Goals, and in education this has given rise to increasing privatization in some countries with reports of for-profit actors taking advantage of gaps in public provision, undermining the responsibility of the State as the duty bearer for the 2030 Agenda.

67. While some progress has been witnessed, there is a sense that it is "business as usual". This agenda is too important to fail; two years in, it is time to deliver.

68. The recommendations of the group include:

(a) Credible road maps must be developed for each Sustainable Development Goal; for Goal 4, these must explicitly provide for education that is of quality, equitable, inclusive and free;

(b) States must deliver their responsibility to finance the Goals; for Goal 4, this should be as detailed within the Education 2030 Framework for Action;

(c) Citizen participation in accountability at all levels must be enabled;

(d) Voluntary national reviews should include formal space for reporting by representative national civil society.

X. Persons with disabilities

69. In the preamble to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, States Parties highlighted the fact that the majority of persons with disabilities live in conditions of poverty, and recognised the critical need to address the negative impact of poverty on persons with disabilities (see General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I).

70. A response to this global challenge is outlined in the 2030 Agenda, which puts at its core a commitment to end poverty everywhere and to leave no one behind. It foresees a better future for all people, which will ensure that every person has a decent, dignified and rewarding life, and achieves their full human potential by eradicating poverty in all its dimensions. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in order to transform the lives of persons with disabilities worldwide.

71. Persons with disabilities comprise an estimated 15 per cent of the world's population, or 1 billion people. Persons with disabilities are overrepresented among the poorest in the world: the 2030 Agenda states, in paragraph 23, that more than 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in poverty. Persons with disabilities face widespread exclusion from all areas of economic, political, social, civil and cultural life, including employment, education and health care.

72. Persons with disabilities experience higher rates of poverty and deprivation and lower levels of income than the general population.[12] This stems from pervasive discrimination and stigma, unequal opportunities and physical and attitudinal barriers. These same factors also mean that the rights of persons with disabilities are not adequately addressed in poverty reduction programmes, social protection floors or development programmes and funds.

73. Full implementation of the commitments made by world leaders at the adoption of the 2030 Agenda requires a progressive increase in dedicated domestic resource allocation and international development cooperation to support the full inclusion of persons with disabilities. Yet, in many countries, austerity measures have been imposed, which reduce government expenditures on human rights, development and social welfare, when and where they are most needed,[13] and persons with disabilities are often among the very hardest hit.[14] A rights-based response to economic crises could be lifting persons with disabilities and their families out of poverty, and would contribute to the achievement of inclusive growth and sustainable development.[15]

74. In its preamble, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states:

> "Recognizing the valued existing and potential contributions made by persons with disabilities to the overall well-being and diversity of their communities, and that the promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty."

XI. Volunteer groups

75. Volunteers and volunteer efforts are essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to achieving the aim of eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity.

76. Volunteering, when properly supported, facilitates access to services in health, education and many other areas to some of the poorest, most marginalized or most vulnerable communities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

77. For poor and marginalized people, the opportunity to volunteer is a chance to move from being a passive recipient to being actively engaged in development processes. The act of volunteering is often the first route through which individuals begin to actively engage in their community and become empowered to realize their rights.

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[12] Sophie Mitra and others, "Disability and poverty in developing countries: a snapshot from the World Health Survey", Social Protection Discussion Paper, No. 1109, April 2011, available from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOCIALPROTECTION/Resources/SP-Discussion-papers/Disability-DP/1109.pdf.

[13] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Human rights and the financial crisis", 2013, available from www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Development/Pages/PromotingHRbasedfinancialregulationmacroeconomicpolicies.aspx.

[14] Andrew Kaye and others, *The Tipping Point: The human and economic costs of cutting disabled people's support*, Bord Press, 2012, available from https://thehardesthit.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/the_tipping_point_oct_2012.pdf.

[15] Harald Hauben and others, "Assessing the impact of European governments' austerity plans on the rights of people with disabilities", 2012, available from www.enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Austerity-European-Report_FINAL.pdf.

78. Volunteers will be central to citizen-led monitoring, which offers opportunities to collect data at a level that is closer to poor and marginalized people.

Enabling environments for volunteering

79. Volunteerism is universal, but it is strongest when it is recognized and supported. Volunteers are most effective where governments create a conducive environment for volunteer participation and are responsive to volunteer-led community initiatives.

80. Some Governments recognize the value of systematic legislation, policies, structures and programmes for volunteer engagement and enable more people to volunteer. The United Nations system, the private sector, volunteer groups and volunteers themselves also have a role to play.

81. Volunteers will be essential to the achievement of the Goals to be reviewed in depth at the high-level political forum in 2017.

Goal 1

82. Much of the institutional infrastructure for delivering social assistance the world over is in the hands of volunteers who are essential to the work of food banks, homeless shelters, drug abuse prevention clinics, workforce training centres, microfinance self-help groups and a host of other organizations.

Goal 2

83. Volunteers extend new knowledge into rural settings. They assist farmers in organizing themselves and promote agricultural cooperatives. They operate feeding programmes, distribute nutrition packages to pregnant women and provide education on nutrition.

Goal 3

84. Volunteers provide vital supplements to health care available through government, reaching out to marginalized groups and delivering health care to the neediest populations in even the most dangerous contexts.

Goal 5

85. Volunteerism can provide women with leadership experience and access to local political structures, provide educational opportunities for women students, help women to start businesses, educate women on financial literacy, offer venues to campaign against harmful practices, promote access to reproductive education and reproductive health, work to combat violence against women and encourage women's political participation.

Goal 9

86. Volunteer groups are crucial providers of microcredit resources that grow small- and medium-sized enterprises. These businesses are important sources of social innovation, devising new and more effective ways to address and reduce social and economic problems.

Goal 14

87. Volunteers advocate for sustainable conservation of the oceans and protecting endangered species, cleaning trash and waste, rehabilitating marine life and engaging in such issues as overfishing and deep-sea drilling.

88. The recommendations of the volunteer groups to the high-level political forum are the following:

(a) Formally recognize the contribution of volunteering to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through the voluntary national reviews of Member States;

(b) Ensure that volunteer groups are fully recognized and supported in national plans and strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Note the commitment of volunteer groups to sharing in the accountability for the successful delivery of the Goals;

(d) Affirm full support for the implementation of resolution 67/290, which supports the participation of non-governmental actors;

(e) Ensure that the data for monitoring the Goals are captured through participatory processes and include the perspectives of the most marginalized voices;

(f) Ensure that the accountability, transparency and review framework for the Goals involves community consultation at all levels.

XII. Older persons

89. The transformational vision of the 2030 Agenda and the pledge to "leave no one behind" means that development agendas must include all persons, of all ages. The implementation of all the Sustainable Development Goals must be based on equality, social justice and human dignity across the life course and recognize that older persons have an equal right to development.

90. Critical to this recognition is the acknowledgment of the diversity and heterogeneity of the population of older persons and an understanding of how the ageism and discrimination reported by older persons themselves[16] are barriers to their inclusion in development responses.

91. By the year 2050, 22 per cent of the world's population will be 60 years of age and older and older persons will outnumber children under age 15. Ageing is happening in every region of the world and 67 per cent of older persons are living in lower- and middle-income countries.

92. The contributions of older persons are essential for sustainable development. Many older women and men make significant contributions to their communities in all aspects of life, in the formal and informal sectors, and as caregivers and breadwinners. They are essential partners in efforts to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity.

93. The thematic paper of the older persons group outlines significant barriers to the realization of older persons' rights, including income insecurity, inadequate access to age-appropriate health and care services, increased gender inequality in older age and data gaps.

94. A survey conducted in 2016 with 70 older persons' organizations in 40 countries yielded several recommendations.[17] These include more collaboration between civil society organizations and government authorities; greater recognition of older persons in government policy, particularly in the areas of social protection,

[16] The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People, "In our own words", 2015; and HelpAge International, *Entitled to the Same Rights*, May 2017.

[17] Survey conducted by the stakcholder group on ageing.

health, food, shelter, water, human rights, elder abuse, ageism and palliative care; the participation of older persons in the formulation of public policy; the dissemination of information; and better data and evidence.

95. The survey also revealed mixed experiences with progress in some countries. However, more must be done to guarantee the participation of, and build capacity for, older persons to contribute to national, regional and global policy development, and to build the neglected issue of ageing into sustainable development frameworks.

96. There is an urgent need to ensure that structures are in place at the regional and national levels to guarantee the participation of the broad range of stakeholders covered by Agenda 2030, including older persons. This is critical to facilitating effective engagement with government structures. We welcome the Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism, which has created space for 17 constituencies to engage in the high-level political forum and the Sustainable Development Goals process at the regional level.

97. Priority must be given to increasing the technical capacity and understanding about ageing, developing policy and legal frameworks to promote the rights of older persons and improving the use of data for policymaking generated by older persons.

98. The voices of older persons are critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. These must be amplified and to ensure that Governments are accountable to their older populations in the implementation of the Goals.

XIII. Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism

99. Two years into the implementation of Agenda 2030, the world continues to be characterized by growth on one hand, but on the other, widening inequalities in wealth, power and resources between and within countries, between rich and poor, and between men, women, LGBTIQ, across different age groups and disabilities, and others. This system is further promoted by the dominating neoliberal economic order that is justifying the various injustices committed against peoples and the planet while promising continuous growth — in extraction, production, consumption and waste — generating vast amounts of pollution and bringing the Earth closer to environmental and social tipping points.

100. Systemic barriers in the Asia-Pacific region include land and resource grabbing; to realize sustainable development, it is imperative to secure the land rights of indigenous peoples, rural women and small-scale farmers. The militarism and conflict often linked to foreign capital and investment can deter the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

101. Many communities affected by large-scale development projects have become the targets of military operations, illegal arrests and detention of their leaders and even killings of activists.

102. Patriarchy and fundamentalism limit opportunities, participation and autonomy for some members of the population and cause whole groups of people to be "left behind". Women are marginalized, resulting in economic, political and cultural oppression.

103. Together, these systemic barriers worsen poverty and inequality, violate people's rights, commit massive damage to the planet and displace people. Corporate capture is occurring, where powerful transnational corporations and a handful of immensely wealthy people are writing the rules of the global economy. Of the largest economies in the world, 51 are now corporations. The revenue of the top 200 corporations exceeds the value of the economies of 182 countries combined.

As State sovereignty and policymaking power has been diminished and increasingly handed to the private sector, no corresponding system to ensure the regulation and accountability of the private sector has emerged.

104. Economic, financial and trade measures that impede development justice and sustainable development through, among others, intellectual property rights that constrain access to affordable and urgent medicines and seeds for farmers; greater restrictions in investment and competition policy that constrain the ability of developing countries to industrialize, diversify and boost productive capacity; and the investor-State dispute settlement system, which imposes a chilling effect on public regulations to protect the most vulnerable communities, public health and equity, the environment, wage policies and macro-prudential policies, are greatly affecting our ability to implement sustainable development.

105. Finally, the past few years have witnessed continued shrinking spaces of civil society all over the globe and the civil society organizations in the Asia-Pacific region have been severely impacted.

106. To strengthen implementation, the intersection between trade and human rights requires human rights impact and sustainability assessments and, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, a compatibility impact assessment of all trade and investment agreements. We also call for an intergovernmental, transparent, accountable, adequately resourced tax body with universal membership that leads global deliberations on international tax cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations. It will strengthen developing countries' capacity to generate sustainable financing for development through combating corporate tax dodging in developing countries and balancing the allocation of taxing rights between source and residence countries.

107. To strengthen accountability, Governments must proactively and transparently share intentions, plans and investments to create forward-looking accountability in addition to the retrospective accountability of progress reporting. Finally, Governments should commit to annual progress reporting in addition to the regular voluntary national reviews at the global level.

XIV. Together 2030

108. At the high-level political forum in 2017, Governments should clearly report on how they are implementing their integrated promises and commitments; mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into their national plans and budgets and working towards eradicating poverty and hunger everywhere; realizing human rights; ensuring the fair and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems; and combating inequalities well before 2030. Furthermore, Governments must share how they are generating effective and inclusive institutions for delivering the Goals.

109. At the high-level political forum, Member States should focus on four main themes:

(a) Poverty eradication that leaves no one behind;

(b) Prosperity shared in a people-centred economy;

(c) A planet that is protected;

(d) Institutions at all levels that are participatory, transparent and accountable.

110. Approaches to poverty alleviation shared at the high-level political forum must include concrete budgeted policies that promote women's rights and gender equality, children's rights, overcoming barriers for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, migrants, minority ethnic groups, young and older persons and others.

111. The high-level political forum must proactively build on existing mechanisms and functional bodies to deliver on its mandate of policy coherence, particularly on thematic issues. The forum is an opportunity to (a) assess gaps in existing mechanisms and identify which population groups are not properly reviewed with respect to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals; and (b) define proper mechanisms to overcome such gaps.

112. With regard to the voluntary national reviews, Together 2030 expects presentations to clearly: (a) outline how inclusive the national process has been at the country level; (b) address comprehensive, coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda; and (c) explain how the accountability framework surrounding the reviews will be progressively strengthened. Preparatory events around thematic reviews should be supported and rest on contributions by all stakeholders.

113. Countries participating in voluntary national reviews should state when they plan to volunteer again and an accountability cycle should be continually in place until 2030, providing regular and predictable spaces for interaction, review and participation.

114. Governments should report on the creation of clear, open, coherent, transparent and regular spaces for the participation of stakeholders in the planning, implementation and accountability of the 2030 Agenda at all levels. Any country that leaves the most marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged "outside the door" of their national discussions cannot be said to "leave no one behind".

115. So far, civil society experiences of participation vary and, in several countries, efforts to include civil society still appear to be tokenistic or there is still a perception that government officials are uncomfortable with building working relationships with civil society.

116. Funding continues to be a major barrier for the participation of civil society, together with lack of capacity to understand the Goals and their interlinkages. Efforts should also be undertaken at all levels to engage stakeholders beyond the "usual suspects" and consultation has to be cross-sectoral and countrywide, not restricted to capitals and other centres of power.

117. In some developed countries, it has been a challenge to engage domestic stakeholders beyond environmental and development-focused NGOs. Engaging subnational government bodies is still a challenge, owing to unawareness or the perception of the Sustainable Development Goals as an "external agenda".

118. In paragraph 89 of the 2030 Agenda, world leaders called upon the major groups and other relevant stakeholders to report on their contribution to the implementation of the Agenda and this is still a missing piece of the global follow-up and review architecture. States Members of the United Nations and the President of the Economic and Social Council should establish clear and meaningful mechanisms — beyond online platforms — to collect, publicize and analyse reports on the contribution of civil society and stakeholders to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels. Finally, the ministerial declaration of the high-level political forum should encourage Governments to partner with civil society and stakeholders in developing capacity building and awareness programs on the 2030 Agenda.